

Main Line Classical Academy
Newsletter
January, 2018

English, Kindergarten, 1st, & 2nd Grade - Frank Chilbert



The English students performed well at poetry night early this month and now begin to take on a new poems to memorize as a class. Their appreciation for poetics increases daily as we continue to learn the tools of poetic analysis. Each grade is also progressing well in their respective phonics lessons. The kindergarteners continue to learn about fundamental spelling rules with Mrs. Jaskot, the first graders have begun learning different forms of the “long vowel” sounds, and the second graders have been learning complex phonics sounds such as “igh”, “ind”, “soft c”, and “ough.” The new unit that only the second graders have begun is a punctuation and grammar unit that sets the foundation for written expression. They have learned about plural and singular nouns, common and proper nouns, action and linking verbs, and common end marks.

Since returning from the break, we have all been spending time with new literature (you may see the stories below). One of the primary goals of an education in the English language is to gain a love for English literature. Within this literature, we can begin asking some of humanity’s oldest questions about personhood, ethics, and virtue. While the kindergarteners grapple with the inconsistent and, at times, cowardly behavior of the mighty Zeus, the first graders have been eagerly awaiting the demise of the vicious Snowbell, the cat who makes Stuart Little’s daily life a wild, and often, dangerous adventure. The second graders, who have been watching Wilbur sit

alone in his pig sty, have declared war on the loneliness and acedia that can plague a person whose has not yet made a true friend. Each of these themes challenges the reader to acknowledge the reality of vice and what effect it can have on its victims. What's more, it also forces them to imagine a better, more virtuous life that we ought strive for, fighting the good fight towards growth in character. As these conversations continue, it is my hope that the students will recognize the rewarding process that we go through as humans when we opens books that have the power to help make us more of who we were meant to be.

Kindergarten:

Poems:

“Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening” by Robert Frost

Stories:

Greek Myths

1st Grade

Poems:

“The Arrow and the Song” by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Stories:

“Stuart Little” by E.B. White

2nd Grade:

Poems:

“In the Garden” by Emily Dickinson

Stories:

“Charlotte’s Web” by E.B. White

English, 3rd, 4th, 5th & 6th Grade - William Walter



This month a few of the literature selections of both the fourth and fifth–sixth grade classes were especially sad. I mentioned this fact to the students—and apologized for it—, but a couple of fourth and fifth graders piped up and said, “I like these sad stories—they’re more interesting!” Those sad stories we read included Tennyson’s *Enoch Arden*, an adaptation of Shakespeare’s *King Lear*, and William Wordsworth’s *Michael*. Using Aristotle’s classic—and still very relevant—work *Poetics*, I taught the 5th and 6th grade literature class the nature and purpose of tragedy. After reading the Tennyson’s tragic tale of a sailor named Enoch (see Genesis 5)—who was stranded on an island, dead to the world but very much alive to experience the pain of separation from his family—, we then discussed how Tennyson’s 19th-century narrative poem fulfills the requirements set out in Aristotle’s discussion of tragedy. Like all successful tragedies, the narrative poem had a “complex plot,” containing situational irony (reversal) and recognition; it also had a character brought down not by vice, but by some mistake or frailty. By looking at the reverse side of the poem’s tapestry, so to speak, the students got to see the complex warp and woof of a literary masterpiece. Our analysis, however, did not take away from the immediate experience of the literature, however, as all of the students were very much able to appreciate the story’s emotional impact.

“I’ll have to bring out the tissues for you,” I said to the 4th grade class, and placed a box on the table before we began *King Lear*. “This will be one of the saddest stories you will ever read. In fact,” I continued, “your English teacher (who is not lachrymose) has had tears stream down his cheeks only four times in response to a work of literature, and one of them was after reading *King Lear*.” (The other three were after reading Thomas Hardy’s *Mayor of Casterbridge* and the above-mentioned Tennyson’s *Enoch Arden* and William Wordsworth’s *Michael*.) I could see the

cogs turning in the students' heads: What was in this play that made their rather staid English teacher emote so? They found out. They read the story about a king—a foolish old king—who banishes his favorite daughter because of his rash temper; they also read about this king's daughter who forgives her father and returns to save him from the deceitful wiles of her sisters, only to die at their hands, ending up in the arms of the eighty-year-old man at the end of the play. The class was riveted by the story and said aloud after we finished reading, "That was very sad!" Tragedies are always sad and can be, in a way, very unpleasant to read or watch. In general, they hold a mirror up to the uglier aspects of life for us to see. Tragedies, however, are not senselessly sad, nor are they hopeless. (I am not a fan of nihilist literature, for sure.) It is not pleasant to watch jealousy and meanness (such as is found in *King Lear*) at work on the stage, but when truth is laid bare in front of the audience, the audience is wiser for it. After watching *King Lear*, people can look to themselves and see their own foolishness or hard-heartedness—and perhaps even change. That's the bright side of tragedy!

While the 4th–6th grade classes were experiencing the throes of tragedy this month, the 3rd grade class enjoyed a humorous account of Henry David Thoreau's mother and Ralph Waldo Emerson's aunt. I always try to whet a student's appetite for what we are about to read, and so before reading the account, I said to the class "One day Thoreau's mother went to visit Emerson's aunt, and although the visit was an agreeable one, Emerson's old aunt strangely kept her eyes closed during the entire visit." They all wanted to know why she would do such a thing, but I said that they would have to find out by reading the story themselves. They then read the true story of Mrs. Thoreau and her daughter Sophia going to Miss Mary Emerson, who was eighty-four at the time. While Mrs. Thoreau talked about her son Henry David, Miss Emerson nodded her head saying, "Very true," now and then, but all the while keeping her eyes shut. Indeed, her eyes were closed every minute her visitors stayed. When Mrs. Thoreau and Sophia rose to go, Miss Emerson said, "Perhaps you noticed, Mrs. Thoreau, that I kept my eyes closed during your visit. I did so because I did not wish to look on the ribbons you are wearing—so unsuitable for a child of God and a woman of your years!" Though Mrs. Thoreau was seventy, her bonnet was cheerfully bright with colorful silks and velvets—not becoming a lady of her age in the 19th century. However, Mrs. Thoreau did not mind Miss Emerson's rebuke a bit, and Sophia stuffed her handkerchief in her mouth to keep from laughing aloud. One of our students loved the story so much she told her babysitter the next day and they laughed aloud.

History, Kindergarten & 1st Grade, Early American History - Frank Chilbert

In history, the students have been refusing to pay their taxes to King George, tossing crates of tea into the Boston Harbor, and crying things like, "Give me Liberty or give me death!" and "No taxation without representation!" It would appear that a great revolution is emerging out of what used to be a very quiet set of colonies in the New World. Although it has taken a lot of courage, the American colonies are beginning to band together under the banner of the Glorious Cause in order to oppose an empire. Most recently, the students have been studying and reciting poems and songs about George Washington and Paul Revere. Here is a little bit from the words of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow:

The Landlord's Tale. Paul Revere's Ride

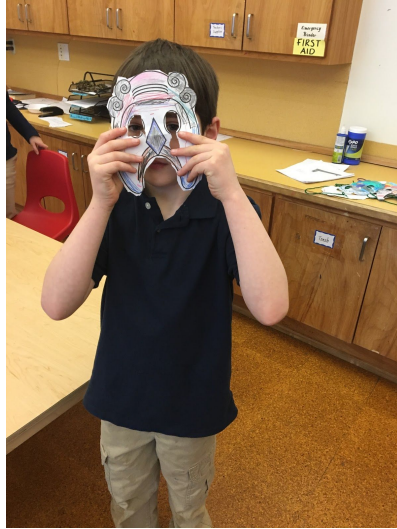
By: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Listen, my children, and you shall hear
Of the midnight ride of Paul Revere,
On the eighteenth of April, in Seventy-Five:
Hardly a man is now alive
Who remembers t^t"If the British march
By land or sea from the town to-night,
Hang a lantern aloft in the belfry-arch
Of the North-Church-tower, hat famous day and year.

He said to his friend, as a signal-light,--
One if by land, and two if by sea;
And I on the opposite shore will be,
Ready to ride and spread the alarm
Through every Middlesex village and farm,
For the country-folk to be up and to arm."

I encourage all of the parents to spend some time reciting this at home!

2nd, 3rd, & 4th Grade, Ancient Greek History - Frank Chilbert



In Ancient Greek history, we have been reading together about Heracles, the persevering hero who was forced by his mother, Hera, to undergo a series of grueling tasks known as the 12 Labors of Heracles. From chopping off immoral serpent heads to holding the entire sky on his shoulders, Heracles has earned his title of Greek Hero. We have also celebrated an event that Heracles was thought to have begun outside of the temple of Zeus in an ancient polis called Olympia. We sang songs, we made flags to represent our own poleis, and we worked hard to earn the honorable olive-branch crown. This year, Corinth has taken home the honor of victory. According to legend, Zeus would now be smiling upon Corinth for the next four years for their great strength.

Most recently, however, we have been learning about the important story about the rise of Athens and how it became the most stable, long-lasting foundation for a form of government called "Democracy." From the bloody laws of Draco, to the just laws of Solon, to the everyday politics of Cleisthenes, we have watched as the Athenian Democratic Experiment has taken

place. We look forward to seeing how long this slow-going, yet opportunistic government will last.

History, 5th & 6th Grade - Graham Gormley

In his *Life of Alexander* Plutarch wrote, "it is not Histories that I am writing, but Lives; and in the most illustrious deeds there is not always a manifestation of virtue or vice, nay, a slight thing like a phrase or a jest often makes a greater revelation of character than battles where thousands fall, or the greatest armaments, or sieges of cities." All too often, the study of history is reduced to amassing endless names and dates, which seems to be the most certain means by which one could murder a student's curiosity in the subject. We try to take our cue by Plutarch's model instead. As students come to see that those in question were living, breathing human beings, they begin to develop a connection to them. Despite the fact that Themistocles or Alexander engaged in spheres of action far beyond what most of us experience in our ordinary lives, writers such as Plutarch, Herodotus, Xenophon, and Thucydides paint a portrait of their deeds that is nevertheless accessible to a young mind full of possibilities. In some cases their lives are held out as a model; in others as something to be avoided.

In that spirit, we have been working on learning the founding myths of various ancient Greek city-states: Perseus of Mycenae, Kekrops of Athens, Inachus of Argos, Kadmos of Thebes, Danaos of Corinth, and Deucalion of Thessaly. To be sure, these are mythological accounts, rather than a depiction of an actual historical figure, but they are a necessary building block to understanding why certain figures acted as they did. For example, it would be difficult to imagine Leonidas making a stand against the Persians at Thermopylae if he didn't truly believe he was a direct descendant of Hercules.

In the process of learning these myths, we've spent time identifying each city-state we've discussed on the map. Having associated the city with its myth, students are more inclined to want to find its location, rather than be faced with the task of identifying cities that hold no meaning for them. This aspect is a work in progress, as there are so many to learn, but it will prove to have been a worthwhile endeavor once we begin the Peloponnesian Wars. It is easy to get lost in Thucydides' account if one is unfamiliar with the lay of the land (and sea).

We also tend to spend a bit more time on Greek literature than most history courses normally would. We've begun working our way through much of *The Iliad*. Admittedly, this will not be an easy read for this age level. Nevertheless, Homer's epic is invaluable in terms of historical understanding, because he seems to be making a case - even at that very early stage - as to what exactly would be required for a united Greece. If Achilles could see the humanity in Hector, the man who killed his best friend, is it impossible to think of, say, a Spartan and an Athenian seeing one another on a similar level of equality later on?

As we enter February, we'll examine the lives of Lycurgus and Solon, as well as the constitutions of Sparta and Athens. If all goes well, we should have completed the Persian Wars by the end of the month.

Math, Kindergarten - Yulia Shpilman

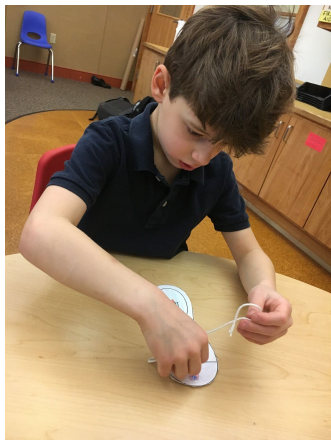


Here is a brief look into what we did in November in Kindergarten math (the structure of our classes remains similar from previous months):

1. **Counting routine** - this month, we have continued our work with 2-digit numbers. In addition to our 100 charts, we have started using base 10 blocks to represent 2-digit numbers visually. With these blocks, there's no confusion between 27 and 72, for example - it is very clear which one is which! We will soon start using these blocks to learn 2-digit addition.
2. **Arithmetic practice** - I am thrilled to see that our students are developing greater and greater mastery of addition within 20 and are able to do calculations quickly and accurately in a variety of settings, from games (1-2-3-peek and see, Turbocount and Splat) to worksheets . In addition to addition, we have started to work on subtraction within 20. The concept of subtraction is significantly more challenging for young kids to master, so we have been using our fingers to help us with this task.
3. **Special topics** - the focus of our special topic this month has been odd and even numbers. We explored the definition, sorted numbers into odd and even, looked for patterns and had fun predicting where we would end up when we jumped back and forth an odd or even number of times. The kids are now pointing out which numbers are odd and even without me prompting them!
4. **Game time** - We continue to play our favorite games of Swish, Blink, Memory, Turbocount, Where is the penguin hiding, and others. One game I strongly recommend for home is **SUM SWAMP** - it is very enjoyable for children and they will master addition and subtraction within 12 very quickly and comfortably while playing.

In February, we will continue our focus on subtraction and will start working on 2-digit addition. We will also circle back to geometry and coordinates from the first half of the year to review and enhance our understanding of certain concepts.

Math, 1st, 2nd, 3rd & 4th Grade - Sasha Fradkin



In our 1st grade math class, the month of January was spent on familiarizing ourselves with and exploring the concept of place value, focusing on 2- and 3-digit numbers. We did a number of activities that involved breaking the numbers into hundreds, tens, and ones and making equivalent exchanges. The students practiced adding and subtracting 1, 10, and 100 to/from 3-digit numbers. They also made up and guessed each others' riddles about 3-digit numbers using concepts involving place value.

Throughout the month of January, the second graders learned many different strategies for adding 2- and 3-digit numbers. For example, a simple problem like $27+38$ can be thought of in many different ways. Here are a few: 1) Add the 10's and the 1's separately, then compute $50+15$, 2) Take 2 from 27 and give to the 38 and compute $25+40$, 3) Compute $27+40$ and subtract 2 (similarly, one can do $30+38$ and subtract 3). The students solved many problems using the different methods (including ones they came up with on their own) and then we discussed the merits and drawbacks of these methods in specific situations.

In the third grade math class, the month of January was spent on exploring perfect squares. The students saw a number of examples for how the geometry of numbers can be used to derive

arithmetic tricks involving perfect squares and some special types of multiplication problems. For example, they saw a geometric explanation for why the product of two numbers that are 2 apart is equal to the square of the number between them minus one and then used this fact to solve some arithmetic problems. They also learned how to quickly square numbers that end in the digit 5. Computing perfect squares is a natural stepping stone to many other types of multiplication problems.

In math class, the fourth grade students spent the month of January learning about and playing with exponents. In addition to performing computations with exponents, students solved problems such as: "A biff is a fuzzy creature that every midnight turns into two biffs identical to the original. Alex brought home one biff on Monday morning. How many biffs will he have the following Monday? What about the Monday after that?" After solving such problems, students get a good sense for exponential growth. We also learned about binary numbers and the role that exponents play in any place-value number system.

Math, 5th & 6th Grade - Tatiana Ter-Saakov

Very exciting times for our math class. Students got acquainted with algebraic expressions and equations, the most crucial tools for all the coming years of school math courses. The whole month of January students were working hard on mastering the topic. We got to use special balance scales that allow representation of negative numbers to illustrate equation solving. We'll complete this chapter by February, which also means we'll be moving to the next Beast Academy book very soon! Next topic of this class is going to be statistics.

In addition to that, Dr. Fradkin kindly invited 5-6 graders to join her lessons on binary, a beautiful math topic in itself - but also crucial for computer science studies. Most school textbooks do not include it, unfortunately. Lucky for us, Beast Academy textbooks do cover this material.

Science, Kindergarten & 1st Grade - Tatiana Ter-Saakov

Students in K-1st were introduced to the concept of force. We talked about different forces on a playground. We also studied gears, both observing the work of real gears, and solving puzzles. Recently we moved to behavior of liquid in communicating vessels.

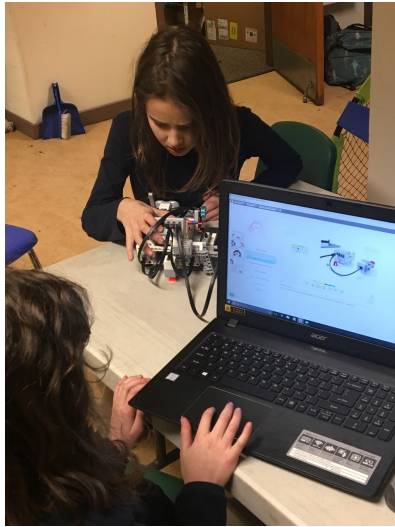
Science, 2nd & 3rd Grade - Tatiana Ter-Saakov

The second and third graders continued studying simple and complex machines. Students observed the use of lever, pulleys, gears, and currently we are learning about hydraulic lift. In addition, behavior of liquid in communicating vessels was explored, both through experiments and puzzles.

Science, 4th, 5th & 6th Grade - Tatiana Ter-Saakov

4th-6th grades switched from chemistry to physics in January, so naturally we started semester with a discussion on the differences and similarities between chemistry and physics. We reviewed the notion of force. Students practiced graphic vector addition, as we studied some cases of several forces applied to an object simultaneously. First and Third Newton's laws were discussed, Second law was introduced briefly. Students conducted a lab on measuring friction on different surfaces. We'll start February with conversation about gravity, which is exciting considering recent LIGO success, and Nobel prizes awarded this fall on gravity studies.

Robotics, Computer Programing - Tatiana Ter-Saakov



We are now in the phase of independent work in robotics. Students, working in pairs or individually, are assigned specific tasks from this year's FLL Hydrodynamics challenge. Each mission requires the robot to move around pre-set field to specific destination point, accomplish a certain task, and return to the base. Sometimes students have to come up with design of an attachment, which will act as a "hand" pressing buttons, turning faucet handles, and carrying pieces. Some missions are already accomplished by the robot with impressive consistency, and all groups are working very hard.

French - Betty d'Herve

I will send home a brochure of French magazines that you can order for your children. Some of the magazines have the stories recorded on CD (“J’aime lire” with CDs, “Histoire pour les petits”, “Les Belles histoires”, “J’apprends à lire”, “Mes premiers j’aime lire”). There are some samples in the lobby of school if you want to take a look at them.

French - Kindergarten

This month, we talked about greetings for the new year. After the winter break, we started by reviewing all the vocabulary of our second book “mes copains et moi.” We continued our routine about the date and numbers. Every day, we reached at least 60 and we are closer to counting to 100. We played more memory games with new vocabulary (foods...) and learned 3 new songs:

- Une souris verte, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2rt2g_afiAg
- Mon âne, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YK0ix1KoGTQ>
- Un éléphant qui se balançait, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ns92r5TQH3k>

We continue to write French sentences in our book by reading and then copying words in the correct order. We worked with adjectives related to color and how to make them agree with the nouns they describe. We described pictures using colors (from our book, as well as from Van Gogh’s paintings). The children read a lot one on one with the teacher.

Vocabulary:

vert/verte (green)

violet/violette (purple)

blanc/blanche (white)

bleu/bleue (blue)

noir/noire (black)

un chat (a cat)

un chien (a dog)

prend (takes)

un arbre (a tree)

un oiseau (a bird)

un train (a train)

French, 1st Grade & 2nd Grade - Betty d’Herve

This month, we talked about greetings for the new year. We continued our routine about the date and numbers, counting now by 5s. We learned the French national anthem “La Marseillaise”(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KTLBYoUy6RM>) and talked about the French Revolution. We also learned a traditional French song “Mon âne” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YK0ix1KoGTQ>) and the students wrote more verses for this song. We learned the vocabulary and talked about the meaning and the historical context. We started to memorize and recite it. We continue to conjugate regular -ER verbs and we learned to conjugate the verb LIRE (to read) in the present tense with singular and plural pronouns. We also practiced asking yes/no questions and answering them either in the positive or negative. We also learned adjectives related to nationality.

Vocabulary:

parler (to speak)

écouter (to listen to)

lire (to read)

je lis (I read)

tu lis (you-singular- read)

il/elle lit (he/she reads)

nous lisons (we read)

vous lisez (you -plural- read)

ils/elles lisent (they read)

français (French)

anglais (english)

américain (American)

espagnol (Spanish)

russe (Russian)

les CD (the CD)

de la musique (music)

la radio (radio)

la prof (a woman teacher)

le prof (a man teacher)

le livre d’anglais (English book)

le livre d’américain (American book)

le livre de français (French book)

le livre d’espagnol (Spanish book)

French, 3rd, 4th, 5th & 6th Grade - Betty d'Herve

This month, we talked about greetings for the new year. We continued our routine about the date and numbers, counting now by 5s. We learned the French national anthem “La Marseillaise” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KTLBYoUy6RM>) and talked about the French Revolution. We also started to study one of Jean de la Fontaine’s fable: “le Corbeau et le Renard” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IPkxWKRHVg8>). We learned the vocabulary and talked about the meaning and the historical context. We started to memorize and recite the fable. We started our fifth French book (Le français en image, book E). In the first lessons, we reviewed the conjugation of the -ER verb and the verb ALLER (to go), insisting on the plural forms of the conjugation. We wrote expressions about date and weather, as well as complex sentences (at least 2 prepositions in the sentence). We talked about how to study and to memorize spelling vocabulary, conjugation, songs and poems. We practiced spelling with “dictée”.

Vocabulary:

ensemble (together)

beaucoup (a lot)

au basket (at basketball)

au restaurant (at the restaurant)

une quiche lorraine (a quiche)

aujourd’hui (today)

il fait chaud (it’s hot)

il fait froid (it’s cold)

il fait beau (it’s a nice day)

Il pleut (it’s raining)

il ne fait pas (it’s not)

c’est/ce n’est pas (it is/it isn’t)

quand (when)

chez nous (at our place)

chez vous (at your place)

chez eux (at their place -boys or boys and girls-)

chez elles (at their place-girls only-)

chez lui (at his place)

chez elle (at her place)

Latin, 4th, 5th & 6th Grade - Asya Sigelman

Since returning from break, we have been moving full speed ahead with Latin grammar, focusing on prepositional phrases, different uses of the accusative case, forms of the negative and the interrogative, and personal pronouns. As always, study of Latin sheds lights on aspects of English which native speakers rarely consider. For example, the students discovered that in English, as in Latin, first- and second-person pronouns (I, you, we, us etc.) have no gender, while third-person pronouns (he, she, it) do! Latin is a highly cumulative subject. As the amount of Latin under our belts grows, there is increased need for review and drill and long-term memory-building skills are essential. The students have been doing a great job with dynamic in-class oral drills. We have also been reviewing some famous Latin quotes. Ask your child what the following mean:

Sapientia est potentia.

Facta, non verba.

Semper fidelis.

Ars longa, vita brevis.

Amor vincit omnia.

And, of course, we have continued with our readings of the *Aeneid*. Currently, we have just embarked on some of the new challenges faced by Aeneas on the Italian shores.

Music, Kindergarten - Karina Butterworth

This month, the children learned a few new songs, including the two songs they performed during Poetry night. They will perform another new song during our next concert in February. The children also learned two violin songs with the bow and opened strings: "Pastoral" and "Squirrel." Their bow holding is much better now and we began to use 1st finger. Once a week, the children write musical dictations with combination of 4-5 notes, whole, half and quarter notes. They are also playing the piano much better now and memorize their songs quickly.

Music, 1st Grade - Karina Butterworth

The children have improved a great deal on the violin since the last concert when they played songs only on open strings. Now they are able to play with four fingers. They sound good and they work seriously. The children also learned to sing a few new songs, including the two songs they performed during Poetry night. They will perform other new songs when they will sing at our next concert on February. The children are able to write musical dictations combining 4-5 notes, whole, half and quarter notes. Also this month we began to sing solfegio, and they are able to switch from ABC to do-re-mi and back easily. They are playing the piano much better and memorize their songs quickly.

Music, 2nd & 3rd Grade - Karina Butterworth

This month, the children learned a few new songs, including the two songs they performed during Poetry night. They will perform other new songs during our next concert in February. During the violin ensemble the children are playing songs with more difficulty using a combination of fingers, with eightheens. They are also able to understand instructions faster. This month we also began to sing solfegio, and they are able to switch from ABC to do-re-mi and back easily.

Music, 4th, 5th & 6th Grade - Karina Butterworth

This month, the children learned a few new songs, including the two songs they performed during Poetry night. They will perform other new songs during our next concert in February. During the violin ensemble the children are able to play songs with more difficulty using a combination of fingers, with eightheens. They are also able to understand instructions faster, some of them can memorize song after playing it just two or three times. This month we began to sing solfegio, and the children are able to switch from ABC to do-re-mi and back easily.

Art, Kindergarten & 1st Grade - Karina Butterworth



In art this month, we worked on finding simple shapes in difficult objects, learned how to build composition, and drawing without putting too much pressure on the pencil. This month the children were working on “Portrait of the boy” (copy of picture from our family collection, watercolor), “Still life with lemon” (pencils), “Winter landscape” (copy of watercolor from our family collection), “Saint George and dragon” (color pencils).

Art, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th & 6th Grade - Karina Butterworth

In art this month, we worked on finding simple shapes in difficult objects, learned how to build composition, drew the human face and body. The children continue to learn how to show perspective in their pictures. This month the children were working on “Portrait of the boy” (copy of picture from our family collection, watercolor), “Still life with lemon” (pencils), “Winter landscape” (copy of watercolor from our family collection), “Martin Luther King’s Day” (free sketch).

Art History, 3rd Grade - Asya Sigelman

Having completed our unit on Leonardo Da Vinci, we headed two hundred years back in time, to 1300’s Florence where Giotto lived. A contemporary of Dante, Giotto is considered to be a proto-Renaissance painter. His work provides fertile ground for discussing the blurred lines of transition between one epoch and the next (when do the Middle Ages end and the Renaissance begin?). While Giotto’s art is already not quite medieval, it differs vastly from Da Vinci’s,

allowing children to appreciate some of the hallmarks of both epochs. Here is a list we made in class, enumerating some basic distinctions between the artwork of the two time periods:

Middle Ages:

- Subjects: mostly religious
- Use of gold leaf, either for entire background or for halos
- Figures: static
- Faces: not intended as the portrait any specific human face
- No perspective or inverted perspective

Renaissance:

- Subjects: secular (contemporary and mythic) along with religious ones
- Absence of gold leaf
- Figures: supple, “as if moving” (contrapposto)
- Faces: even sacred faces look like portraits
- Meticulous focus on perspective

To help transport ourselves into the times and work of Giotto, we read a children’s book about the painter’s childhood, *A Boy Named Giotto*, by Paolo Guarnieri. Next week, we will be reading Jane Langton’s *Saint Francis and the Wolf*, a retelling of a medieval legend about the saint to whose life Giotto devoted a famous cycle of frescoes.

Art History, 4th & 5th Grade - Jessica Todd Harper

In art history we have started learning about the Renaissance. The students have learned how Florence was eager to top its arch-rival, Milan, and started to build in the late 13th century what it hoped would be the most impressive cathedral ever made- complete with a giant closed dome! Unfortunately, no one knew how to build a giant closed dome and it wasn't until the engineer/ artist/ architect/ goldsmith Filippo Brunelleschi arrived on the scene in the early 1400's that the cathedral was completed. With new safety ideas (workers drank watered down wine instead of regular wine while working, there was a safety net around the construction areas), and many new construction inventions, Brunelleschi completed the dome in 1436. Not only was he credited with drawing the first architectural blue prints, but he also is thought to be the inventor of lineal perspective. Our discussion of perspective took us to one of the most

accomplished Renaissance artists to have lived: Leonardo da Vinci. The students studied his "Last Supper" and learned to decode the symbolism of this image that seeks to combine ancient Greek ideas of the divine (represented by geometry) with Christian narrative. The numbers 3 (the trinity) and 4 (the 4 gospels) have meaning in this painting, repeated in numbers of windows, wall hangings, and groupings of apostles (4 groups of 3). We read the last supper narrative in the gospel of Matthew while the students studied their last supper reproductions. "I know which one is Judas!", "Look- Peter is holding a knife!" were exciting discoveries as the students identified the money bag in Judas' hand and thought about foreshadowing when they learned that later that same night Peter cuts off the ear of a Roman guard.

Hands-On Skills - Adam Darer

This month we continued our woodworking unit in Hands-On Skills. The students learned basic woodworking technique and how to use screwdrivers, wood glue, measuring tape, leveler, wood clamps, hand saw, and square. We are now working on using these skills to build chairs and benches for the playground area.

Hebrew - Tal Gutman

Kindergarten - 1st Grade

Beginning January, we spent time reviewing topics studied before the winter break – food, animals, classroom objects, family members and body parts. In order to develop functional communication skills, we combined our vocabulary learning with practicing verbal and nominal sentences. for example:

- I like chicken/I don't like to eat chicken
- I want a popsicle/ water/ bissli
- I eat sandwiches with cheese/ I eat chocolate with almonds
- The balloon is red/ the cat is grey/ the fish is orange
- I have a green coat/ I have pink gloves/ I don't have a scarf

We also practiced numbers until 60, and combined this with telling the age of students in the school and family members. Also, we learned the opposites: big/small, with/without, a lot/a few.

We finished the winter topic in which we studied weather vocabulary and winter clothes, and are moving forward to the next topics – birthdays, seasons and sweets which we will study through the song "ani ohev" and the most famous Israeli birthday song "hayom yom-holedet":

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SJmqmn6_IKw

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6nbLonF6txI>

Besides speaking and listening skills, we are working on writing and reading skills. The kindergarten continues to practice recognizing and naming the Aleph bet letters and sounds and to write them. In first grade, we practiced writing with emphasize on spelling words, as well as reading short stories with 3 sounds ("a", "e", "l") and now we are practicing the "o" sound.

3rd grade

During January we practiced simple and complex verbal sentences in present tense. Each verb we practiced with our materials, the students then also used to build independent sentence related to their own life. For example, when we studied the verb "get up/awake" – each student said when he/she gets up in the morning.

We also learned to tell the time and combined it with the verb studies, so the students practiced describing their schedule: When they eat breakfast, what they studies at 10 am, when they eat lunch, and when they go home from school. Besides that, we also learned new vocabulary including additional countries and languages. The students were particularly curious about Yemen, תימן" so we spoke about this country and the Jewish Yemeni community that arrive from Yemen to Israel and their contribution to Israeli culture. When we studied the word "note" "פִּתְּקָה" the students wrote in Hebrew a note to their friends and gave it to them. If the note wasn't secret note, the students read what they received in front of the class.

We practiced through role play functional interactions at the restaurant, in the store, and in the park and continued to work on the professions unit (job titles, tools each profession uses and verbs describing their work). Another topic this month was the use of adjective and the agreement between noun and adjective in gender and number and to how to tell if a part of the body hurts.

Christian Studies - Betsy Bashore



In Christian Studies this month we have talked about God's faithfulness to His covenants both in the Old and New Testament. When God makes the Abrahamic Covenant, He makes it with Himself, meaning that He would be willing to die to keep His promise to Abraham. This exposes the length, height and depth of God's love for His people which is later proved in the death of Christ to save all of mankind. Meanwhile, Jesus challenges the Jewish leader's expectation of who the Messiah is supposed to be. Finally, we are on the cusp of the long awaited birth of Isaac! We marveled at how long it felt for us to get here but how much longer it was for Abraham and Sarah - 25 years!